

# The Idaho City Area Trails System Descriptions

The Idaho City Area Yurt and Trail System is made up of 3 Park N' Ski areas adjacent to Highway 21 between 18 and 25 miles northeast of Idaho City, ID. It is approximately a two-hour drive from Boise, ID. A permit is required to park in the Park N' Ski parking lots between November 15<sup>th</sup> and April 30<sup>th</sup>. An annual pass is \$25.00 and a temporary 3-day pass is \$7.50. Passes are available in many of the local sport shops, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Headquarters building at 5657 Warm Springs Avenue in Boise and at the local grocery store and gas station in Idaho City.

The summer trail network is made up of a mixture of Forest Service roads, closed rehabilitated logging roads and single-track trails. All trails in this system are marked by 5" x 7" blue reassurance diamonds ([blue blazes](#)). The trails are non-motorized during snow months. For winter use, the trails are generally rated More Difficult or Most Difficult for skiing under good snow conditions. There are some short steep sections with sharp turns requiring advanced skiing techniques.

## Dogs

Dogs are not allowed on any of the Banner Ridge Park N' Ski trails during the winter (Nov 15 - Apr 30.) Dogs are welcomed on the trails in the Whoop-Um-Up area and Gold Fork area. Dog owners are responsible for removing all of their dog droppings from the trails and to leash/control their dogs in the parking lots at all times.

Please use the trail descriptions below in conjunction with the appropriate Park N' Ski maps located on the web site.

<http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/recreation/southernidahoparknski.aspx>

## **Banner Ridge Park N' Ski Area Trails** **(No dogs allowed Nov 15 to Apr 30)**

Yurts in this area are the Banner Ridge and Elkhorn yurts. The trailhead in the summer is located across the highway from the Park N' Ski parking lot. This area connects to the Gold Fork Park N' Ski Area by the Beaver and Ralph's trails.

### **The Elkhorn Loop (7.3 miles)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	4.5 hours
Elevation change:	700 feet
Winter Information:	This is a groomed trail
Summer Information:	The first two miles are one an old logging road open to motorized traffic

If traveling clockwise on this loop, the first 1.2 miles is a steep climb to an open-ridge top. The ridge provides an excellent view of the South Fork of the Payette River Canyon and Sawtooth Mountains. The trail continues along the ridge for about .6 mile

and then enters rolling meadows and forest. Halfway around, the loop starts a gradual descent with a steep section and sharp turns for about 0.5 mile.

Another interesting trail is the Elkhorn/Beaver/Ralph's/Skyline loop. This also, starts at the Banner Ridge trailhead and ends at the west side of the Gold Fork trailhead. This trail is 7.8 miles. To avoid traffic on Highway 21 use a shuttle vehicle between the 2 trailheads.

### **Lehn's Loop (2.4 miles)**

Winter Rating:	Easiest
Approx winter ski time:	1 hour
Elevation change:	200 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This is a single-track trail

One would start this trail from the Elkhorn trail between the Banner Ridge and Elkhorn Yurts' turnoffs. A high clearance vehicle is recommended to drive to the top of the Banner Ridge. Park close to the Elkhorn yurt summer parking spot. From that spot, travel south on the Cougar trail about 100 yards into the woods and then on the Elkhorn trail south for about 0.3 mile until you pass through a large aspen grove. At the signpost, travel downhill 0.3 mile to the start of Lehn's loop. At this point you have a choice of continuing east or turning south. There are 3 connectors between Lehn's loop and the Elkhorn loop or Cougar trail. Lehn's loop has grades of less than 10% and no sustained climbs over 60 feet. The terrain is rolling, has dense stands for spruce and firs and contains numerous creeks and wetlands. This loop is a great beginning to intermediate mountain bike trail.

### **The Alpine Trail (2.5 miles)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	4 hours
Elevation change:	700 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This is a non-motorized trail

This trail dissects the Elkhorn loop. The Alpine trail intersects the Elkhorn Loop 0.6 mile from the trailhead. It connects with the lower east side of the Elkhorn Loop. The distance for an Elkhorn/Alpine loop is 7 miles. The Alpine trail has spectacular views interspersed in lush mountain greenery.

### **The Twister Trail (4.4 miles)**

Winter Rating:	Most Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	5 hours
Elevation change:	300 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This is a motorized road/trail

This trail is on part of the Little Beaver Creek road which closes to motorized traffic during snow months. If you want an all day ski or snowshoe trip, start on the Twister

trail just south of the Banner Ridge parking lot on Highway 21. Follow the winding Twister trail for 4.4 miles until you intersect the Beaver trail.

Turn south on the groomed Beaver trail (0.1 mile) until you reach Ralph's trail. Follow Ralph's trail (0.8 mile) to the Skyline trail and take the Skyline trail to the Gold Fork parking lot. Total distance is 7.0 miles. It is best to have a shuttle vehicle to take you back to the Banner Ridge parking lot.

A shorter winter loop is to start up the Elkhorn loop to the lower Elkhorn intersection (0.2 mile) to the connector trail to the Twister trail and back to the Banner Ridge parking lot, a loop of about 2.1 miles.

A good mountain bike ride can be had by climbing the first 0.6 mile of the Elkhorn loop to the northern intersection of the Alpine trail. Then take the Alpine trail 2.6 miles to the Beaver trail. Stay on the Beaver trail for about 1 mile to the Twister intersection. Follow the Twister trail 4.4 miles back to Highway 21 just south of the Banner Ridge parking lot. This loop is 8.6 miles on both single-track trail and motorized Forest Service road.

### **The Banner Trail (0.9 mile)**

Winter Rating: More Difficult

Approx winter ski time: 1 hour

Elevation change: 500 feet

Winter Information: This is a groomed trail

Summer Information: This is a non-motorized trail.

There are several marshy areas on this trail and is not recommended for mountain biking.

This trail starts just beyond the toilet on the north side of Highway 21. It provides scenic views of the Lowman Valley to the north and west. The Banner trail intersects the Elkhorn loop at .9 mile. The distance for a Banner/Elkhorn loop is 1.9 miles.

### **Cougar Trail (3.3 miles)**

Winter Rating: Most Difficult

Approx winter ski time: 2 hours

Elevation change: 300 feet

Winter Information: This is a non-groomed trail

Summer Information: The first .5 mile is on an old logging road; the rest is a non-motorized, single-track trail.

The closest way to access this trail is to follow the Elkhorn loop clockwise 2.0 miles. The north side of the Cougar trail starts at the "Bear Crossing" sign. Follow the single-track trail until you get to the old logging road. Stay on this road, following the ridgeline east for 0.5 mile. Locate the marked signpost on the south (right) side of the road and turn south (right). The trail passes through rolling forested country for about 2 miles, crossing 2 bridges. From the second bridge, you will climb 0.5 mile until the trail once again intersects the Elkhorn loop. The Cougar/Elkhorn loop is 4.4 miles. If you start at the trailhead the distance is 6.4 miles.

**Snowshoe Loop (1.8 miles)**

Winter Rating: More Difficult  
Approx winter ski time: 1 hour  
Elevation change: 400 feet  
Winter Information: This is a non-groomed trail  
Summer Information:

The west side of this loop is on an old logging road; the rest is a non-motorized, single-track trail.

The Snowshoe loop starts behind the toilet at the trailhead and switchbacks steeply up the draw for about 100' in elevation for about 0.2 mile to the first intersection. At this intersection you can travel either side of the loop. If you travel counter clockwise, recommended way, turn right at the intersection and follow the blue blazes up the hill 0.6 mile where you will see a ridgeline through a forest of large Ponderosa pines. Follow the blazes a short distance cross-country to the top of the ridgeline. At this point you will find a signpost. From here turn left and continue along the ridgeline. You will be following an old skid road as it winds you south around a small 30-foot high, forested knob. Continue past the knob about 0.2 mile until the blue blazes direct you off the ridgeline left and cross country down into a creek drainage. (For those who like off-trail exploring through rolling open meadows, continue along the ridgeline a short distance and then back track.) Once you get into the creek drainage, the trail will once again follow on old roadbed. Continue down the road and drainage until you come to a grove of aspens and a fork in the roadbed. At this point you will be about 100' north of Highway 21. From this point turn left up the hill. Travel about 400' until you arrive at the intersection you encountered earlier. From there turn right and descend to the trailhead.

**The Wayout Trail (3.0 miles)**

Winter Rating: Most Difficult  
Approx winter ski time: 1 hour (going downhill)  
Elevation change: 800 feet  
Winter Information: This is a non-groomed trail  
Summer Information: This trail connects the Cougar trail to the Beaver trail and is a single-track trail and partially motorized

The northern end of the Wayout trail is a single-track trail through lush mountain forest then the trail transitions to an old logging road which passes through a burn area before a downhill section to the Beaver trail.

There are several "loops" you can make using the Wayout trail. One, the Elkhorn/Cougar/ Wayout/Beaver trail, is 11.2 miles starting from the Banner Ridge trailhead and ending up where the Little Beaver Creek road intersects Highway 21 close the Beaver Creek Cabin. The use of a shuttle vehicle is recommended to avoid traffic on Highway 21. Otherwise you will have an additional 3 miles to hike or ride on the highway.

Another loop is the Elkhorn/Cougar/Wayout/Beaver/lower Elkhorn loop. Starting from the Banner Ridge parking lot, this loop presents a variety of scenery for mountain bikers or hikers in the summer time. It is 10.8 miles.

For a longer mountain bike ride with many spectacular views, try a loop consisting of the Elkhorn/Cougar/Wayout/Beaver/lower Elkhorn/Alpine and then back to the Elkhorn loop and the Banner Ridge parking lot. This loop is 13.3 miles.

If you don't mind a ride on Highway 21 and the uphill climb between the Beaver Creek Cabin and the Banner Ridge parking lot, a good workout is a loop consisting of the Elkhorn/Cougar/Elkhorn/Beaver/Ridge/Skyline/Summit/Beaver trails to Highway 21 and back to the Banner Ridge parking lot. This loop is 17.2 miles.

## **The Gold Fork Park N' Ski Parking Area Trails**

### **(Dogs allowed year-round)**

Yurts in this area are the Skyline (east side) and Whispering Pines (west side) yurts. The trailhead in the summer is located in the Park N' Ski parking lot. This area connects to the Banner Ridge Park N' Ski Area by the Beaver and Ralph's trails. It connects with the Whoop-Um-Up Park N' Ski Area by the Beaver and Wagon trails.

This area has an east and west side. The west side has the Gold Fork loop, Moose, Lodgepole and Double Dip trails. The east side has the Skyline, Summit, Ridge, Ralph's and Beaver trails. The Forest Service closes the east side to motorized traffic September 15<sup>th</sup> until snowmelt, for wildlife protection.

#### **West Side**

##### **The Gold Fork Loop (5.2 miles)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	3 hours
Elevation change:	500 feet
Winter Information:	This is a groomed trail
Summer Information:	This trail is part motorized and part single-track trail on a closed, rehabilitated logging road

If you travel clockwise, the trail starts, left of the toilet in the parking lot, with a short, steep climb out of the trailhead. The route follows a forested drainage, with a gradual climb for about 1.9 miles. This is the non-motorized part of the loop. About 0.5 mile south of where the trail intersects the old logging road are nice winter telemark slopes. If you continue north, on the old logging road there are many good viewpoints before the start of a gradual 2.4 descent back to the parking lot.

##### **The Lodgepole Trail (0.3 mile)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	0.5 hour

Elevation change:	350 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This trail is a single-track trail on a closed rehabilitated logging road

This Lodgepole trail dissects the Gold Fork loop. It follows a drainage through the mountain forest. A Lodgepole/Gold Fork loop is 4.0 miles.

#### **The Double Dip Trail (0.4 mile)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	0.5 hour
Elevation change:	500 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This trail is a single-track trail on a closed rehabilitated logging road

The Double Dip trail dissects the Gold Fork loop. It has more elevation change than the Lodgepole trail. It also passes through lush mountain greenery. A Double Dip/Gold Fork loop is 4.7 miles.

#### **The Moose Trail (1.4 miles)**

Winter Rating:	Most Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	2 hours
Elevation change:	450 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This trail is a single-track trail

The Moose trail dissects the Gold Fork loop. Starting on the south side of the loop about 50' from the trailhead, the Moose trail starts climbing a ridgeline with a series of switchbacks through a densely forested area before skirting a high mountain meadow on the top of the ridgeline. The trail then re-enters the forest, gently rolling between knob tops until it takes a side hill course right before it intersects the north side of the Gold Fork loop. A Moose/Gold Fork loop is 3.8 miles.

#### **East Side**

##### **The Summit Trail (4.9 miles)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	3 hours
Elevation change:	580 feet
Winter Information:	This is a groomed trail
Summer Information:	This trail is partially open to motorized travel and partially limited to non-motorized travel with some single-track sections

The Summit trail is the first trail across Highway 21 from the Gold Fork Park N' Ski parking lot. The trail climbs up a drainage for about 1 mile. At 0.5 mile, is the west intersection with the Skyline trail. At this intersection, the Summit trail turns right (south) and climbs about 460 feet over 1.7 miles to the east Skyline intersection. The scenic views to the south include Sunset Mountain and Pilot Peak. After the east intersection with the Skyline trail, Summit trail continues on for 2.7 miles. This stretch of trail varies

from fairly level ground to a steep 40-foot-high pitch to a forest plantation and then a gradual descent through small open meadows before a final descent to the intersection with the Beaver trail. A Summit/Skyline loop is 4.0 miles

### **The Skyline Trail (1.8 miles)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	2.5 hours
Elevation change:	450 feet
Winter Information:	This is a groomed trail.
Summer Information:	This trail is partially open to motorized travel and partially limited to non-motorized trail. There are two gates on the trail, which restrict motorized travel. One is just past the Skyline and Ralph's intersection and the other gate is just north of the east Skyline and Summit intersection.

The Skyline trail is accessed from the Summit trail. At the west intersection with the Summit trail, continue left up the drainage. The trail here is a shaded course up the mountain before leveling off and following the contour of the mountain. After 1.2 miles is the intersection with Ralph's trail. Continue to the right until you top out and have a view overlooking a long south-facing meadow. At the meadow you can view the mountains to the south. Continue down the meadow through small pines and aspens to the east intersection with the Summit trail. The Skyline trail is 1.8 miles.

A Summit/Skyline/Ralph's/Ridge loop is 5.3 miles round trip from the trailhead.

### **Ralph's Trail (0.8 mile)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	3/4 hour
Elevation change:	400 feet
Winter Information:	This is a groomed trail.
Summer Information:	This trail is a single-track, non-motorized trail on a rehabilitated logging road

This trail connects the east side of Gold Fork and the Banner Ridge trail areas. The easier way to use this trail is to start at the Banner Ridge Park N' Ski parking lot. This way you will be generally descending and you can travel continually downhill to the Gold Fork Park N' Ski parking lot via the Skyline trail. Ralph's trail is a partially shaded trail through mountain forests with a few spectacular views of surrounding mountains. Ralph's trail is very steep at the top and bottom and has one sharp 180-degree turn at the north intersection with the Ridge trail.

### **Ridge Trail (.8 mile)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	3/4 hour
Elevation change:	>100 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail.
Summer Information:	This trail is a single-track.

This trail was designed as a ridgeline connector between the Banner Ridge and Gold Fork trail areas. The north end of this trail starts at the 180-degree turn on Ralph's trail.

Continue straight through this turn and follow the Ridge trail through the forest until its south end at the Skyline intersection. Ridge trail is 0.8 mile. A Ralph's/Ridge loop is 1.9 miles.

### **Beaver Trail (6.5 miles)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	4 hours
Elevation change:	1,020 feet
Winter Information:	This is a groomed trail
Summer Information:	This trail is a Forest Service road open to motorized travel

During ski season, it is recommended that this trail be accessed from the Banner Ridge parking lot and skied downhill from the Elkhorn loop past the Beaver Creek Cabin and then 1.3 miles on single-track, ungroomed trails to the Whoop-Um-Up parking lot. A shuttle vehicle at the Whoop-Um-Up parking lot is recommended, as you are about 800 feet lower and 5.5 miles by highway from your starting point. The Beaver trail starts at the Elkhorn loop and descends gradually along a creek in a remote valley for 4.2 miles until you reach the Beaver/Summit intersection. The trail makes a short 40-foot climb and then descends steeply for about 0.6 mile. It then continues on through meadows on almost level ground for 1.9 miles to the Beaver Creek Cabin, its end point. The winter Beaver trail is 6.5 miles. The portion of this trail south of the Summit intersection is only periodically groomed in the winter.

The Beaver trail is blue-blazed on a portion of the Little Beaver Creek Road.

## **The Whoop-Um-Up Park N' Ski Parking Area Trails**

### **(Dogs allowed year-round)**

The yurt located in this area is the Rocky Ridge yurt. The trailhead in the summer is located in the Park N' Ski parking lot. All trails are ungroomed in the winter. Snowmobilers share the parking lot but have separate trails, leaving little chance you will encounter a snowmobile on the trails. These trails are rated Easiest and More Difficult under good snow conditions. There are short, steep sections with sharp turns requiring advanced skiing techniques. Trails are on both sides of Highway 21.

### **Whoop-Um-Up Loop (2.3 miles)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	3 hours
Elevation change:	480 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This trail is both a single-track trail and a Forest Service road

This trail starts on the west side of Highway 21. At the first signpost you must choose your direction of travel. The better views on the trail are seen by going counter-

clockwise on the loop. This way you will see the fantastic views while walking without having to stop and turn around. Either direction requires you to climb up hill for about half of the loop and then descend back to the trailhead. There is a bridge over the Whoop-Um-Up Creek on the northern side of the loop.

#### **Upper Lamar Trail (1.0 mile)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	1 hour
Elevation change:	360 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This trail is a single-track

This trail intersects the south side of the Whoop-Um-Up loop. About 0.2 mile from the trailhead, the Upper Lamar trail turns south (left) and climbs uphill. After reaching the high point on the trail, there is a steep down hill grade until you intersect the Whoop-Um-Up loop once again. During summer months, there is a water crossing on the eastern end of the loop.

#### **Pilgrim Loop (0.7 mile)**

Winter Rating:	Easiest
Approx winter ski time:	3/4 hour
Elevation change:	120 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This is a single-track trail

The Pilgrim loop is shortest trail in the system. It starts on the southeast side of the Whoop-Um-Up parking lot and travels through dense woods and small meadows. You must traverse part of the Pilgrim loop to access the other trails in this area. There are both bridges and water crossings on this loop.

#### **Lower Lamar Trail (1.9 miles)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	1.5 hours
Elevation change:	200 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail.
Summer Information:	This trail is a single-track and partially motorized trail.

This loop starts on the southeast side of the parking lot. Take the Pilgrim loop, staying to the right for about 0.2 mile. At this intersection stay right and start uphill. After about 0.5 mile of this steady uphill the trail divides to form the loop. To the right the trail continues uphill a short way before a downhill descent and a 90 degree left turn onto a Forest Service road. Continue on this road for about 0.5 mile before making a left turn and start up hill to the beginning of the loop.

#### **Valley Trail (0.6 mile)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	30 minutes

Elevation change:	200 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This trail is a single-track trail

This trail starts off the Lower Lamar trail. At the Lower Lamar/Valley intersection you will descend downhill through dense woods about 0.5 mile until the terrain flattens out. Then turn left before intersecting the snowmobile trail (in summer a road), and parallel the snowmobile trail for about 0.1 mile until you intersect the Wagon trail. To return to the parking lot turn left on the Wagon trail. A right turn will take you across the snowmobile trail (road) to the Beaver Creek Cabin.

### **Wagon Trail (1.1 miles)**

Winter Rating:	More Difficult
Approx winter ski time:	1 hour
Elevation change:	150 feet
Winter Information:	This is a non-groomed trail
Summer Information:	This trail is a single-track trail with a short section on Highway 21

The Wagon trail's primary purpose is access between the parking lot and the Beaver Creek Cabin and the Beaver trail. The trail starts approximately halfway around the Pilgrim loop. From the Pilgrim/Wagon trail intersection, continue through the Edna Creek campground, across the Edna Creek road, which is a groomed snowmobile trail in the winter. You will then make a short climb where the trail intersects Highway 21 at a narrow road cut. The trail is actually the road shoulder for about 100' to where the next road cut is. Turning right here head downhill about 0.5 mile to the Beaver Creek Cabin and the Beaver trail starting point.

